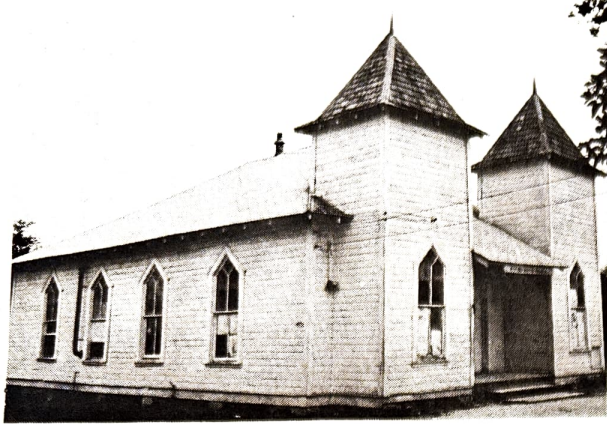


## Bernice's Corner



MT. HOREB BAPTIST CHURCH organized in 1874.

Blanco County might well be representative of the conglomerate of the peoples, races, colors, and cultures that make up our United States of America. In addition to the Irish, English, German, and other anglos, the Blacks and the Mexican have made their own contributions to our heritage.

Though some few of the earliest Blanco County settlers may have brought their slaves, these were very few. Most of the people that made up Peyton's Colony in Blanco County were from elsewhere.

It was not until about 1865 that an ex-slave, Peyton Roberts, and a small group of friends settled about nine miles slightly northeast of Blanco on the old Austin-Blanco road. Thus began a thriving community that eventually boasted of over four hundred residents and a two-teacher school with seventy-five or eighty students.

The settlement was first called Freedmen's Colony by white settlers but was always known as Peyton's Colony by the Blacks, because he was their leader.

Peyton's original owner, Jeremiah Roberts, was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in 1801 and at the age of 24 came to that part of Mexico known as Texas, settling in what is now the Caldwell-Bastrop counties area. He became quite a large land holder and had numerous slaves, among which was Peyton, his wife and five children.

Mr. Roberts was a deeply religious man and the thought of owning another human being bothered him. He gave his slaves to his children. Peyton and his family were given to a son.

The son was also repulsed by the idea of holding human beings in bondage. In the early 1860's he gave them their freedom provided that they would remain with him as hired hands until the end of the Civil War.

Peyton made an agreement with his former owner that they would receive no wages but be given those things necessary for starting a new life in an underdeveloped wilderness. He would need some sort of wagon, a yoke of oxen, farming equipment, a start of chickens, cattle, hogs, a dog or two, and furniture and supplies until they could grow their first crop.

In the fall of 1865, after the crops were harvested, Peyton and some of the men-folk gathered together supplies and started a westward trek, searching for that haven where they might leave the violence and hatred of post-Civil War days for a place where they could live to themselves in peace and quiet.

Their former master told them of public land west of Austin that could be homesteaded. And so it was that some forty miles west of Austin they found an isolated hilly region of very poor soil and here they chose to stop.

Though actual proof is lacking, the story that the few slaves in the Blanco County region settled at Cold Mountain Springs after they were freed has been an accepted fact by the descendants of the early settlers of Blanco.

It is assumed that find a few friendly folk already living there promoted Peyton and his group to make a choice also. Combining efforts, they hewed their cabins, built fireplaces from the supply of rocks on the adobe soil was a mortar and, mixed with stones, used to fill the spaces between the logs.

Winter was coming, they returned to their near Lockhart to await time of warmer weather they would return with families to begin their lives.

It was a heavy winter, it seemed that the freezes would not

but at last came the warm day in early spring when the jubilant families left familiar surroundings for the unknown. The slow plodding of the oxen and the hardships of the trail did not dampen the high expectancy that the snug cabins would be awaiting them at the end of their journey.

But what a pitiful sight greeted them as they topped the last hill. The heavy rains and the freezes had worked havoc with the mud and grass mortar, and holes and cracks made the cabins far from weather-proof. So many jobs to do and each one seemed to be the one that must be done first. The cold and rain of early spring seemed to make it imperative to build a lime kiln as soon as possible.

The kiln was built but the heat of the furnace ruined the structure because there was no lime to hold it together. Word of their plight got back to their former master and he came, bringing lime, and helped in every way he could.

At last the kiln was producing, so that when properly treated and mixed with sand, it made a mortar to withstand the elements. Not only there, but many other places in Blanco County one finds stone structures still standing that are held together by none other than sand and the lime as made in such lime kilns as this.

These hardy people knew what hard labor was and expected to do just that, but they were hardly prepared for the terrible hardships which faced them. Anyone whose ancestors lived through the trials and hardships of reconstruction days can recall stories of the lack of all supplies - those articles which we call necessities today. It mattered not whether you were a big land holder or a day laborer, sugar, flour, coffee, lumber and clothing were not to be had. One wove the cloth and made his clothing, tanned

The adobe might not make good weather-proof mortar, but crumbled fine, dampened, and packed it did make a firm brick-like floor that could be swept with brooms made from weeds or tree branches. Instead of mopping, one just covered it once more with the white adobe, dampened and packed it again.

As the imperative for physical needs were being met, their thoughts turned to God and education for the children. A few of the adults had been given some training by their masters, so the first school was in the home, however, the first organized school was actually established in 1870.

Because a home did not seem to be a proper place for public worship, the Reverend Jack Burch pitched a tent and organized the first church in 1874. The church was named Mt. Horeb Baptist Church and the charter members numbered five, namely: Susan Burch, Susan Brigham, James Upshaw, Cleo Upshaw, and Millie McConico.

The Reverend Burch continued as leader of the church for many years. In all there have been twelve pastors to serve the church. Soon a log cabin was erected and this also served as the first school house.

Mail service is of great importance to any growing community and in Peyton's Colony, the lack of it was felt. Though it was on the main artery of travel from Blanco to Austin, the road was a far cry from what would be considered a good unpaved road today. When a kindly neighbor made the 22 mile round trip to Blanco for supplies, he usually brought much of the community's mail, but by 1896, it was decided to apply for a post office.

Rejoicing was great when, in the waning days of the year, Alfred W. Walker was named Postmaster of Peyton, Texas. The post office was

30, 1936, the office was again abandoned.

Once more the community was served by a rural carrier, London City. Mr. City made the trip in his one-seated buggy, pulled by one horse, picking up out-going mail from the boxes as he came to Blanco and delivering the mail on his return trip. For many years cold, heat, or rain never interrupted his daily round.

He had "side curtains" and a heavy laprobe as partial protection from the biting, wet northerners that sometimes left him almost ice-coated by the time he reached his destination. A thaw-out around the little cast-iron heater in the Blanco Post Office where Lee Brown would add another log or two to the stove and give him a chair in which to rest before facing the chill of the return trip. As he grew older, others took his place: Homer and Hattie Mae Coffee among others.

To get to this one-of-a-kind settlement one leaves Blanco on Ranch Road 165 to follow rather closely the course of the lovely Blanco River some four miles before its serpentine course takes in another direction, while the highway continues a scenic route on its way to Hickey.

Soon after passing the Wimberley turn-off, Ranch

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## Let us be your



## Santa

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## PEYTON COLONY,

Road 2325, there is a cattle-guard to the left with a neat black and white sign which says, "Mt. Horeb Baptist Church." Because it faces the opposite direction one may not see it and climb the long steep hill to the top of the 'divide'.

By this he will know that he has gone too far. But as he turns around he cannot regret having made the blunder as he catches his breath at the most spectacular panoramic view in Blanco County--the many shades of purple-blue of the far and near hills, Twin Sisters Mountains etched on the horizon and the Blanco River valley spread as a multicolored carpet before him.

Retracing his steps, the sign is easily visible this time and turning in, he will go a mile or so on a well-graded road to reach his destination, the Mt. Horeb Baptist Church. Just beyond is the schoolhouse.

The gas pump is gone, the schoolhouse, too, is silent except those times when friends are invited for special occasions. The graveyard, enclosed by a chainlink fence, also stands in mute witness of those who spent their lives here. But the church is not silent.

Wednesday night prayer meeting is still held and each Sunday morning the faithful express their belief in God in wonderful music, singing, Bible teaching, and preaching.

The cornerstone tells one that it was erected in 1917 and lists the Deacons: Dillard Jones, George Jones, Alex Upshaw, Jap Burch, Sam Patch, with H.M. Bouden, pastor, and W. Jones as secretary.

According to the 1870 census, there were twenty-one colored males and twenty-three colored females in the area and today that figure would be near the same. Yet the courage and stamina of their forebearers give them the strength to never flag in their continuing struggle to eke out a living in the not so productive hill country which they call home, whether you name it Peyton's Colony or Board House.